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SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY

The Ingersoll Lecture, 1904

SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY

BY

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THE INGERSOLL LECTURESHIP

Extract from the will of Miss Caroline Haskell Ingersoll, who died in Keene, County of Cheshire, New Hampshire, Jan. 26, 1893.

First. In carrying out the wishes of my late beloved father, George Goldthwait Ingersoll, as declared by him in his last will and testament, I give and bequeath to Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., where my late father was graduated, and which he always held in love and honor, the sum of Five thousand dollars ($5,000) as a fund for the establishment of a Lectureship on a plan somewhat similar to that of the Dudleian lecture, that is —one lecture to be delivered each year, on any convenient day between the last day of May and the first day of December, on this subject, "the Immortality of Man," said lecture not to form a part of the usual college course, nor to be delivered by any Professor or Tutor as part of his usual routine of instruction, though any such Professor or Tutor may be appointed to such service. The choice of said lecturer is not to be limited to any one religious denomination, nor to any one profession, but may be that of either clergyman or layman, the appointment to take place at least six months before the delivery of said lecture. The above sum to be safely invested and three fourths of the annual interest thereof to be paid to the lecturer for his services and the remaining fourth to be expended in the publishment and gratuitous distribution of the lecture, a copy of which is always to be furnished by the lecturer for such purpose. The same lecture to be named and known as "the Ingersoll lecture on the Immortality of Man."

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Cebes answered: "I agree, Socrates, in the greater part of what you say. But in what concerns the soul men are apt to be incredulous."

Phædo, Plato, Jowett's Translation, 3d ed. II. 209.

"But surely it requires a great deal of argument and many proofs to show that when a man is dead his soul yet exists, and has any force or intelligence." *Ibid.*

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too."

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám.

"Plant one eye of faith in the eye of the soul and itt will utterlie darken with its heavenly brightness the eye of sense and reason, as the sunne the lesser starres."

Diary of the Rev. John Ward, of Stratford-upon-Avon, 1648 to 1679, London, 1839.

"Gone for ever! Ever? No — for since our dying race began,
Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of man." *Tennyson.*

SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY

I

INTRODUCTION

IN all ages no problem has so stretched to aching the *pia mater* of the thoughtful man as that put in such simple words by Job: "If a man die, shall he live again?" Appreciating the fact that a question of such eternal significance presents special aspects at special periods, Miss Caroline Haskell Ingersoll founded this lectureship in memory of her father, George Goldthwait Ingersoll, of the class of 1805. Knowing that the days were evil and the generation perverse, and imitating, perhaps, the satiric touch in Dean Swift's famous legacy,[1] she made this community the recipient of her bounty.

To attempt to say anything on immortality seems presumptuous, — a subject on which

everything possible has been said before, and so well said, not only by the master minds of the race, but by the many far wiser than I, who have spoken from this place. But having declined the honor once, and having learned from President Eliot that others of my profession had also declined, when a second invitation came it seemed ungracious, even cowardly, not to accept, though at the present moment, before so distinguished an audience, I cannot but envy the discretion of my friends, and with such a task ahead I feel as Childe Roland must have felt before the Dark Tower.

One of my colleagues, hearing that I was to give this lecture, said to me, "What do you know about immortality? You will say a few pleasant things, and quote the 'Religio Medici,' but there will be nothing certain." In truth, with his wonted felicity, my life-long mentor, Sir Thomas Browne, has put the problem very well when he said, "A dialogue between two infants in the womb concerning the state of this world might

Urn Burial

handsomely illustrate our ignorance of the next, whereof, methinks, we yet discourse in Plato's denne — the cave of transitive shadows — and are but embryon philosophers." Than the physician, no one has a better opportunity to study the attitude of mind of his fellow-men on the problem. Others, perhaps, get nearer to John taking no thought for the morrow, as he disports himself in the pride of life; but who gets so near to the real John as known to his Maker, to John in sickness and in sorrow and sore perplexed as to the future? The physician's work lies on the confines of the shadow-land, and it might be expected that, if to any, to him would come glimpses that might make us less forlorn when in the bitterness of loss we cry, —

Autocrat of the Breakfast Table

> Ah Christ! that it were possible
> For one short hour to see
> The souls we loved, that they might tell us
> What and where they be!

Tennyson, *Maud*

Neither a philosopher nor the son of a philosopher, I miss the lofty vantage-ground

of a prolonged training in things of the spirit enjoyed by my predecessors in this lectureship; but to approach the problem from the standpoint of a man, part at least of whose training has been in the habit and faculty of observation, as Aristotle defines science, and whose philosophy of life is as frankly pragmatic as that of the shepherd in "As You Like It,"[2] may help to keep a discussion of the incomprehensible within the limits of the intelligence of a popular audience.

Ethics

Within the lifetime of some of us, Science — physical, chemical, and biological — has changed the aspect of the world, changed it more effectively and more permanently than all the efforts of man in all preceding generations. Living in it, we cannot fully appreciate the transformation, and we are too close to the events to realize their tremendous significance. The control of physical energies, the biological revolution and the good start which has been made in a warfare against disease, were the three great

achievements of the nineteenth century, each one of which has had a profound and far-reaching influence on almost every relationship in the life of man. And, not knowing what a day may bring forth, we have entered upon another century in an attitude of tremulous expectation, and with a feeling of confidence that the coöperation of many laborers in many fields will yield a still richer harvest. It may be asked at the outset whether the subject be one with which science has anything to do, except on the broad principle of the famous maxim of Terence, "Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto." Goethe remarked that "mankind is always advancing; man always remains the same; science deals with mankind," and it may be of interest to inquire whether in regard to a belief in a future life, mankind's conquest of nature has made the individual more or less hopeful of a life beyond the grave.

A scientific observer, freeing his mind, as far as possible, from the bonds of educa-

tion and environment, so as to make an impartial study of the problem, would be helped at the outset by the old triple classification, which fits our modern conditions just as it has those of all ages; and I shall make it serve as a framework for this lecture. While accepting a belief in immortality and accepting the phases and forms of the prevailing religion, an immense majority live practically uninfluenced by it, except in so far as it ministers to a wholesale dissonance between the inner and the outer life, and diffuses an atmosphere of general insincerity. A second group, larger, perhaps, to-day than ever before in history, put the supernatural altogether out of man's life, and regard the hereafter as only one of the many inventions he has sought out for himself. A third group, ever small and select, lay hold with the anchor of faith upon eternal life as the controlling influence in this one.

II

THE LAODICEANS

THE desire for immortality seems never to have had a very strong hold upon mankind, and the belief is less widely held than is usually stated, but on this part of the question time will not permit me to do more than to make, in passing, a remark or two. Even to our masters, the Greeks, the future life was a shadowy existence. "Whether they really partake of any good or evil?" asks Aristotle of the dead. Who does not sympathize with the lament of Achilles, stalking among the shades and envying the lowliest swain on earth? "It harrows us with fear and wonder," as Jowett says, speaking of Buddhism, "to learn that this vast system, numerically the most universal or catholic of all reli-

Ethics

Odyssey, book xi.

gions, and in many of its leading features most like Christianity, is based, not on the hope of eternal life, but of complete annihilation."[3] And the educated Chinaman looks for no personal immortality, but "the generations past and the generations to come form with those that are alive one single whole; all live eternally, though it is only some that happen at any moment to live upon earth."[4]

Practical indifference is the modern attitude of mind; we are Laodiceans, — neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, as a very superficial observation will make plain. The natural man has only two primal passions, to get and to beget, — to get the means of sustenance (and to-day a little more) and to beget his kind. Satisfy these, and he looks neither before nor after, but goeth forth to his work and to his labor until the evening, and returning, sleeps in Elysium without a thought of whence or whither. At one end of the scale the gay and giddy Cyrenaic rout — the society set of the mod-

ern world, which repeats with wearisome monotony the same old vices and the same old follies — cares not a fig for the life to come. Let us eat and drink; let us enjoy every hour saved from that eternal silence. "There be delights, there be recreations and jolly pastimes that will fetch the day about from sun to sun, and rock the tedious year as in a delightful dream."[5] Even our more sober friends, as we see them day by day, interested in stocks and strikes, in base-ball and "bridge," arrange their view of this world entirely regardless of what may be beyond the flaming barriers — *flammantia mœnia mundi.* Where, among the educated and refined, much less among the masses, do we find any ardent desire for a future life? It is not a subject of drawing-room conversation, and the man whose habit it is to buttonhole his acquaintances and inquire earnestly after their souls, is shunned like the Ancient Mariner. Among the clergy it is not thought polite to refer to so delicate a topic except officially from the pulpit. Most ominous of

Milton, *Areopagitica*

all, as indicating the utter absence of interest on the part of the public, is the silence of the press, in the columns of which are manifest daily the works of the flesh. Any active demand for a presentation of the spiritual and of the unseen would require that they should sow to the spirit and bring forth the fruits of the spirit. On special occasions only, in sickness and in sorrow, or in the presence of some great catastrophe, do disturbing thoughts arise: "Whence are we, and why are we? Of what scene the actors or spectators?" and man's heart grows cold at the thought that he must die, and that upon him, too, the worms shall feed sweetly. Few among the religious can reproach themselves, as did Donne, with an over-earnest desire for the next life, and those few have the same cause as had the Divine Dean — a burden of earthly cares too grievous to be borne. The lip-sigh of discontent, when in full health, at a too prolonged stay in Kedar's tents changes quickly, in sickness, to the strong cry of

Galatians, v. 19–21.

Shelley, *Adonais*

Psalms, cxx. 4.

Hezekiah as he drew near to the gates of the grave. And the eventide of life is not always hopeful; on the contrary, the older we grow, the less fixed, very often, is the belief in a future life. Waller's bi-mundane prospect[6] is rarely seen to-day. As Howells tells us of Lowell,[7] "His hold upon a belief in a life after death weakened with his years." Like Oliver Wendell Holmes, "We may love the mystical and talk much of the shadows, but when it comes to going out among them and laying hold of them with the hand of faith, we are not of the excursion."[8]

Isaiah, xxxviii. 10.

If among individuals we find little but indifference to this great question, what shall we say to the national and public sentiment? Immortality, and all that it may mean, is a dead issue in the great movements of the world. In the social and political forces what account is taken by practical men of any eternal significance in life? Does it ever enter into the consideration of those controlling the destinies of

their fellow creatures that this life is only a preparation for another? To raise the question is to raise a smile. I am not talking of our professions, but of the every-day condition which only serves to emphasize the contrast between the precepts of the gospel and the practice of the street. Without a peradventure it may be said that a living faith in a future existence has not the slightest influence in the settlement of the grave social and national problems which confront the race to-day.

Then, again, we habitually talk of the departed, not as though they had passed from death unto life and were in a state of conscious joy and felicity, or otherwise, but we count them out of our circle with set deliberation, and fix between them and us a gulf as deep as that which separated Dives from Lazarus. That sweet and gracious feeling of an ever-present immortality, so keenly appreciated in the religion of Numa, has no meaning for us. The dead are no longer immanent, and we have

lost that sense of continuity which the Romans expressed so touchingly in their private festivals of the Ambarvalia, in which the dead were invoked and remembered. Even that golden cord of Catholic doctrine, the Communion of the Saints, so comforting to the faithful in all ages, is worn to a thread in our working-day world. Over our fathers immortality brooded like the day; we have consciously thrust it out of lives so full and busy that we have no time to make an enduring covenant with our dead.

Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*

Another reason, perhaps, for popular indifference is the vague mistiness of the picture of the future life, the uncertainty necessarily pertaining to the things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive," the absence of features in the presentation which prove attractive, and the presence of others most repulsive to the Western spirit. What is there in the description in the Apocalypse to appeal to the

matter-of-fact occidental mind? The infinite monotony of the oriental presentation repels rather than attracts, and the sober aspirations of Socrates are more appreciated than the ecstasies of St. John. Commenting upon this Jowett says, "And yet to beings constituted as we are, the monotony of singing psalms would be as great an affliction as the pains of hell, and might be even pleasantly interrupted by them." How little account is taken of our changed attitude of mind on these questions!

Plato, *Apology*

Introduction to *Phædo*

Emerson somewhere remarks that the cheapness of man is every day's tragedy, and the way human life has been cheapened in our Western civilization illustrates practically how far we are from any thought of a future existence. Had we any deep conviction that the four thousand persons who were killed last year on the railways of this country,[9] and the nine thousand who met with violent deaths, were living souls whose status in eternity depended on

their belief at the moment when they were sent to their account "unrespited, unpitied, unreprieved," — had we, I say, any earnest conviction of this, would not the hearts of this people be knit together in a fervid uprising such as that which brought destruction upon Benjamin, in the matter of a certain Levite sojourning on the side of Mount Ephraim? Think, too, of the countless thousands of the Innocents made to pass through the fire to the Moloch of civic inefficiency! Of the thousands of young men and maidens sacrificed annually to that modern Minotaur, typhoid fever! We intellectuals, too, bear the brand of Cain upon our foreheads, and cull out our college holidays with gladiatorial contests, which last year cost the lives of thirty-five young fellows, and brutally maimed other five hundred.[10] Rend the veil of familiarity through which we look at this bloody record, this wholesale slaughter, and a cold chill will strike the marrow of any thoughtful man, and he will murmur in shame: —

Judges, xix.

Horace, *Carmina*, I. 35

> Eheu! cicatricum et sceleris pudet
> Fratrumque. Quid nos dura refugimus
> Aetas? quid intactum nefasti
> Liquimus? unde manum juventus
> Metu deorum continuit. [11]

To the scientific student there is much of interest in what Milton calls this business of death, which of all human things alone is a plain case and admits of no controversy, and one aspect of it relates directly to the problem before us. The popular belief that however careless a man may be while in health, at least on the "low, dark verge of life" he is appalled at the prospect of leaving these warm precincts to go he knows not where, — this popular belief is erroneous. As a rule, man dies as he has lived, uninfluenced practically by the thought of a future life. Bunyan could not understand the quiet, easy death of Mr. Badman, and took it as an incontestible sign of his damnation. The ideal death of Cornelius, so beautifully described by Erasmus, is rarely seen. In

Eikonoklastes

Life and Death of Mr. Badman

Colloquies

our modern life the educated man dies usually as did Mr. Denner in Margaret Deland's story — wondering, but uncertain, generally unconscious and unconcerned.[12] I have careful records of about five hundred death-beds, studied particularly with reference to the modes of death and the sensations of the dying. The latter alone concerns us here. Ninety suffered bodily pain or distress of one sort or another, eleven showed mental apprehension, two positive terror, one expressed spiritual exaltation, one bitter remorse. The great majority gave no sign one way or the other; like their birth, their death was a sleep and a forgetting. The Preacher was right: in this matter man hath no preëminence over the beast, — "as the one dieth so dieth the other."

John Ward, Preacher

Ecclesiastes, iii. 19

Take wings of fancy, and ascend with Icaromenippus, and sit between him and Empedocles on a ledge in the moon, whence you can get a panoramic view of the ant-like life of man on this world.

Lucian, *Dialogues*

What will you see? Busy with domestic and personal duties, absorbed in civic and commercial pursuits, striving and straining for better or worse in state and national affairs, wrangling and fighting between the dwellers in the neighboring ant-hills, — everywhere a scene of restless activity as the hungry generations tread each other down in their haste to the goal, but nowhere will you see any evidence of an overwhelming, dominant, absorbing passion regulating the life of man because he believes this world to be only the training-ground for another and a better one. And this is the most enduring impression a scientific observer would obtain from an impartial view of the situation to-day.

III

THE GALLIONIANS

THE great bulk of the people are lukewarm Laodiceans, concerned less with the future life than with the price of beef or coal. Our scientific student, scanning his fellow men, would soon recognize the second group, the Gallionians, who deliberately put the matter aside as one about which we know nothing and have no means of knowing anything. Like Gallio, they care for none of these things, and *Acts*, xviii. live wholly uninfluenced by a thought of the hereafter. They have either reached the intellectual conviction that there is no hope in the grave, or the question remains open, as it did with Darwin, and the absorbing interests of other problems and the every-day calls of domestic life satisfy the

mind. It was my privilege to know well one of the greatest naturalists of this country, Joseph Leidy, who reached this standpoint, and I have often heard him say that the question of a future state had long ceased to interest him or to have any influence in his life. I think there can be no doubt that this attitude of mind is more common among naturalists and investigators than in men devoted to literature and the humanities.

Science may be said to have at least four points of contact with a belief in immortality. In the first place, it has caused a profound change in men's thoughts within the past generation. The introduction of a new factor has modified the views of man's origin, of his place in nature, and, in consequence, of his destiny. The belief of our fathers may be expressed in the fewest possible words: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Man was an *angelus sepultus* which had —

1 *Corinthians*, XV. 22

Donne, *Biathanatos*

Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Milton, *Hymn to the Nativity*

Created in the image of God, "sufficient to have stood, though free to fall," he fell, and is an outlaw from his father's house, to which he is now privileged to return at the price of the Son of God. This is the Sunday story from orthodox pulpits, and it is what we teach to our children. On the other hand, to science man is the one far-off event towards which the whole creation has moved, the crowning glory of organic life, the end-product of a ceaseless evolution which has gone on for æons, since in some early pelagian sea life first appeared, whence and how science knows not. The week-day story tells of man, not a degenerate descendant of the sons of the gods, but the heir of all the ages, with head erect and brow serene, confident in himself, confident in the future, as he pursues the gradual paths of an aspiring change. How profoundly the problem of man's destiny and of his relation to the unseen world has been

Paradise Lost

affected by science is seen in the current literature of the day, which expresses the naturally irreconcilable breach between two such diametrically opposed views of his origin. But this has not been wholly a result of the biological revolution through which we have passed. The critical study of the Bible has weakened the belief in revelation, and so indirectly in immortality, and science has had a good deal to say about the credibility of what purports to be a direct revelation based on miracles. The younger ones among you cannot appreciate the mental cataclysm of the past forty years. The battle of Armageddon has been fought and lost, and many of the survivors, as they tread the *via dolorosa*, feel in aching scars

Paradise Lost

the bitter change
Of fierce extremes, extremes by change more fierce, —

the heavy change from the days when faith was diversified with doubt, to the present days, when doubt is diversified with faith.

Secondly, modern psychological science dispenses altogether with the soul. The old difficulty for which Socrates chided Cebes, who feared that — Plato, *Phædo*

> the soul
> Which now is mine must reattain
> Immunity from my control,
> And wander round the world again, — Matthew Arnold

this old dread, so hard to charm away, lest in the vast and wandering air the homeless Animula might lose its identity, that eternal form would no longer divide eternal soul from all beside, — this difficulty science ignores altogether. The association of life in all its phases with organization, the association of a gradation of intelligence with increasing complexity of organization, the failure of the development of intelligence with an arrest in cerebral growth in the child, the slow decay of mind with changes in the brain, the absolute dependence of the higher mental attributes upon definite structures, the instantaneous loss of consciousness when

the blood supply is cut off from the higher centres — these facts give pause to the scientific student when he tries to think of intelligence apart from organization.[13] Far, very far, from any rational explanation of thought as a condition of matter, why should he consider the, to him, unthinkable proposition of consciousness without a corresponding material basis? The old position, so beautifully expressed by Sir Thomas Browne, "Thus we are men and we know not how: there is something in us that can be without us and will be after us; though it is strange that it has no history what it was before us, nor cannot tell how it entered us," — this old Platonic and orthodox view has no place in science, which ignores completely this something that will be after us. The new psychologists have ceased to think nobly of the soul, and even speak of it as a complete superfluity. There is much to suggest, and it is a pleasing fancy, that outside our consciousness lie fields of psy-

Religio Medici

chical activity analogous to the invisible yet powerful rays of the spectrum. The thousand activities of the bodily machine, some of them noisy enough at times, do not in health obtrude themselves upon our consciousness, and just as there is this enormous subconscious field of vegetative life, so there may be a vast supra-conscious sphere of astral life, the manifestations of which are only now and then in evidence, — a sphere in which, when all the nerve of sense is numb, in unconjectured bliss or in the abyss of tenfold complicated change, the spirit itself may commune with others, "Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost," and do diverse wonders of which we are told in the volumes of the Society for Psychical Research, and which make us exclaim with Montaigne, "The spirit of man is a great worker of miracles."

Henry More

In Memoriam, xciii.

Thirdly, the futile search of science for the spirits. It may be questioned whether more comfort or sorrow has come to the race since man peopled the unseen world with

spirits to bless and demons to damn him. On the one hand, what more gracious in life than to think of a guardian spirit, attendant with good influences from the cradle to the grave, or that we are surrounded by an innumerable company from which we are shut off only by this muddy vesture of decay? Perhaps they live in the real world, and we in the shadow-land! Who knows? Perhaps the poet is right: —

Stephen Phillips, *Herod*

> I tell you we are fooled by the eye, the ear:
> These organs muffle us from that real world
> That lies about us; we are duped by brightness.
> The ear, the eye doth make us deaf and blind;
> Else should we be aware of all our dead
> Who pass above us, through us, and beneath us.

If we had to do only with ministering spirits, what a benign effect such a belief might exercise, indeed has exercised, on the minds of men; but, alas! there is another side to the picture, and there is no blacker chapter in our history than that in which is told the story of the prince of the power of the air and his legions. For weal or for woe, — who

shall say the more potent? — it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of this belief in a spirit-world.

The search of science for the spirits has been neither long nor earnest; nor is it a matter of surprise that it has not been undertaken earlier by men whose training had fitted them for the work. It is no clear, vasty deep, but a muddy, Acheronian pool in which our modern spirits dwell, with Circe as the presiding deity and the Witch of En Dor as her high priestess. Commingling with the solemn incantations of the devotees who throng the banks, one can hear the mocking laughter of Puck and of Ariel, as they play among the sedges and sing the monotonous refrain, "What fools these mortals be!" Sadly besmirched and more fitted for a sojourn in Ancyra than in Athens has been the condition of those who have returned from the quest, and we cannot wonder that scientific men have hesitated to stir the pool and risk a touch from Circe's wand. All the more honor to

Anatomy of Melancholy, Part II. sect. 4

those who have with honest effort striven to pierce the veil and explore the mysteries which lie behind it. The results are before us in the volumes of the Society for Psychical Research, and in the remarkable work of that earnest soul, F. W. H. Myers.[14] To enter upon a criticism of this whole question would be presumptuous. I have not had the special training which gives value to a judgment, but for many years I have had a practical interest in it, since much of my work is among the brothers of Sir Galahad, and the sisters of Sir Percival, among the dreamers of dreams and the seers of visions, whose psychical vagaries often transcend the bounds of every-day experiences. After a careful review of the literature, can an impartial observer say that the uncertainty has been rendered less uncertain, the confusion less confounded? I think not.

Dare I say
No spirit ever brake the band
That stays him from the native land
Where first he walk'd when claspt in clay?

In Memoriam, xciii.

Who dare say so? But on the other hand, who dare affirm that he has a message from the spirit-land so legible and so sensible that the members of the National Academy of Sciences would convene to discuss it in special meeting?

Fourthly, knowing nothing of an immortality of the spirit, science has put on an immortality of the flesh, and in a remarkable triumph of research has learned to recognize in every living being at once immortal age beside immortal youth. The patiently worked out story of the morphological continuity of the germ plasm is one of the fairy-tales of science. You who listen to me to-day feel organized units in a generation with clear-cut features of its own, a chosen section of the finely woven fringe of life built on the coral reef of past generations, — and, perhaps, if any, you, citizens of no mean city, have a right to feel of some importance. The revelations of modern embryology are a terrible blow to this pride of descent. The individual is nothing more

than the transient off-shoot of a germ plasm, which has an unbroken continuity from generation to generation, from age to age. This marvelous embryonic substance is eternally young, eternally productive, eternally forming new individuals to grow up and to perish, while it remains in the progeny always youthful, always increasing, always the same. "Thousands upon thousands of generations which have arisen in the course of ages were its products, but it lives on in the youngest generations with the power of giving origin to coming millions. The individual organism is transient, but its embryonic substance, which produces the mortal tissues, preserves itself imperishable, everlasting, and constant."[15] This astounding revelation not only necessitates a readjustment of our ideas on heredity, but it gives to human life a new and a not very pleasant meaning. It makes us "falter where we firmly trod" to feel that man comes within the sweep of these profound and inviolate biological laws, but it explains

why nature — so careless of the single life, so careful of the type — is so lavish with the human beads, and so haphazard in their manufacture, spoiling hundreds, leaving many imperfect, snapping them and cracking them at her will, caring nothing if the precious cord on which they are strung — the germ plasm — remains unbroken. Science minimizes to the vanishing-point the importance of the individual man, and claims that the cosmic and biological laws which control his destiny are wholly inconsistent with the special-providence view in which we were educated, — that beneficent, fatherly providence which cares for the sparrow and numbers the very hairs of our head.

IV

THE TERESIANS[16]

THERE remains for consideration the most interesting group of the three to the scientific student, representing the very opposite pole in life's battery, and either attracting or repelling, according as he has been negatively or positively charged from his cradle. There have always been two contending principles in human affairs, an old-time antagonism which may be traced in mythology and in the theologies, and which in philosophy is represented by idealism and realism, in every-day life by the head and the heart. Aristotle and Plato, Abelard and St. Bernard, Huxley and Newman, represent in different periods the champions of the intellect and of the emotions. Now on the question of the im-

mortality of the soul, the only people who have ever had perfect satisfaction are the idealists, who walk by faith and not by sight. "Many are the wand bearers, few are the mystics," said Plato. "Many be called, but few are chosen," said Christ. Of the hosts that cry Lord! Lord! few have that earnest expectation of the creature which has characterized in every age those strong souls laden with fire who have kept alive this sentiment of immortality, — the little flock of Teresians, who feel that to them it is given to *know* the mysteries. *Matthew*, xiii. 11

Not always the wise men after the flesh (except among the Greeks), more often the lowly and obscure, women more often than men, these Teresians have ever formed the moral leaven of humanity. Narrow, prejudiced, often mistaken in worldly ways and methods, they alone have preserved in the past, and still keep for us to-day, the faith that looks through death. Children of Light, children of the Spirit, whose ways

are foolishness to the children of this world, mystics, idealists, with no strong reason for the faith that is in them, yet they compel admiration and imitation by the character of the life they lead and the beneficence of the influence they exert. The serene faith of Socrates with the cup of hemlock at his lips, the heroic devotion of a St. Francis or a St. Teresa, but more often for each one of us the beautiful life of some good woman whose —

In Memoriam, xxxii

> Eyes are homes of silent prayer,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Whose loves in higher love endure,

do more to keep alive among the Laodiceans a belief in immortality than all the preaching in the land. Some of you may recall how strongly this is brought out in Cardinal Newman's University Sermon, "Personal Influence, the Means of Propagating the Truth."[17]

Though a little flock, this third group is the salt of the earth, so far as preserving for us a firm conviction of the existence of

another and a better world. Not by the lips, but by the life, are men influenced in their beliefs; and when reason calls in vain and arguments fall on deaf ears, the still small voice of a life lived in the full faith of another may charm like the lute of Orpheus and compel an unwilling assent by a strong, indefinable attraction, not to be explained in words, outside the laws of philosophy, — a something which is not apparent to the senses, and which is manifest only in its effects. In that most characteristic Eastern scene before King Darius, in the discussion, Which is the strongest thing in the world, Zorobabel was right in giving woman the preëminence, since she is the incarnation of the emotional, — of that element in life which sways like a reed the minds of men. 1 *Esdras*, iv.

The remarkable development of the material side of existence may make us feel that Reason is King, with science as the prime minister, but this is a most short-sighted view of the situation. To-day as always

the heart controls, not alone the beliefs, but the actions of men, in whose life the head counts for little, partly because so few are capable of using their faculties, but more particularly because we are under the dominion of the emotions, and our deeds are the outcome of passion and prejudice, of sentiment and usage much more than of reason. From the standpoint of science, representing the head, there is an irreconcilable hostility to this emotional or cardiac side of life's problems, yet as one of the most important facts in man's history it has to be studied, and has been studied in a singularly lucid way in this University by one recognized everywhere as a master in Israel. Unfortunately, with the heart man believeth, not alone unto righteousness, but unto every possible vagary, from Apollonius of Tyana to Joseph Smith. Where is the touchstone to which a man may bring his emotions to the test, when as the great Stagyrite remarks, ordinary opinions are not less firmly held by some

William James

Ethics

than positive knowledge by others? In our temporizing days man is always seeking a safe middle ground between loyalty to the intellectual faculty and submission to authority in an unreasoning acceptance of the things of the spirit. On the question of immortality the only enduring enlightenment is through faith. "Only believe," and "he that believeth," — these are the commandments with comfort; not "only think," and "he that reasoneth," for these are the commandments of science. To many the awkwardness of the mental predicament would be more keenly felt were it not for the subtleness and suppleness of our understanding, which is double and diverse, just as the matters are double and diverse. Montaigne

Though his philosophy finds nothing to support it, at least from the standpoint of Terence the scientific student should be ready to acknowledge the value of a belief in a hereafter as an asset in human life. In the presence of so many mysteries which

have been unveiled, in the presence of so many yet unsolved, he cannot be dogmatic and deny the possibility of a future state; and however distressing such a negative attitude of mind to the Teresian, like Pyrrho, he will ask to be left, reserving his judgment, but still inquiring. He will recognize that amid the turbid ebb and flow of human misery, a belief in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come is the rock of safety to which many of the noblest of his fellows have clung; he will gratefully accept the incalculable comfort of such a belief to those sorrowing for precious friends hid in death's dateless night; he will acknowledge with gratitude and reverence the service to humanity of the great souls who have departed this life in a sure and certain hope — but this is all. Whether across death's threshold we step from life to life, or whether we go whence we shall not return, even to the land of darkness, as darkness itself, he cannot tell. Nor is this strange. Science is organized

Job, x. 21, 22

knowledge, and knowledge is of things we see. Now the things that are seen are temporal; of the things that are unseen science knows nothing, and has at present no means of knowing anything.

The man of science is in a sad quandary to-day. He cannot but feel that the emotional side to which faith leans makes for all that is bright and joyous in life. Fed on the dry husks of facts, the human heart has a hidden want which science cannot supply; as a steady diet it is too strong and meaty, and hinders rather than promotes harmonious mental metabolism. In illustration, what a sad confession that emotional Dryasdust, Herbert Spencer, has made when he admits that he preferred a third-rate novel to Plato and that he could not read Homer! Extremes meet. The great idealist would have banished poets from his Republic as teachers of myths and fables, and had the apostle of evolution been dictator of a new Utopia, his Index Expurgatorius would have been

Autobiography

still more rigid. To keep his mind sweet the modern scientific man should be saturated with the Bible and Plato, with Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton; to see life through their eyes may enable him to strike a balance between the rational and the emotional, which is the most serious difficulty of the intellectual life.

A word in conclusion to the young men in the audience. As perplexity of soul will be your lot and portion, accept the situation with a good grace. The hopes and fears which make us men are inseparable, and this wine-press of Doubt each one of you must tread alone. It is a trouble from which no man may deliver his brother or make agreement with another for him. Better that your spirit's bark be driven far from the shore — far from the trembling throng whose sails were never to the tempest given — than that you should tie it up to rot at some lethean wharf. On the question before us wide and far your hearts will range from those early days when

Shelley, *Adonais*

matins and evensong, evensong and matins sang the larger hope of humanity into your young souls. In certain of you the changes and chances of the years ahead will reduce this to a vague sense of eternal continuity, with which, as Walter Pater says, none of us wholly part. In a very few it will be begotten again to the lively hope of the Teresians; while a majority will retain the sabbatical interest of the Laodicean, as little able to appreciate the fervid enthusiasm of the one as the cold philosophy of the other. Some of you will wander through all phases, to come at last, I trust, to the opinion of Cicero, who had rather be mistaken with Plato than be in the right with those who deny altogether the life after death; and this is my own *confessio fidei.*

Tusculan Disputations

Immortality is a complex problem, difficult to talk about, still more difficult to write upon with any measure of intelligence or consistency. Like Simias, in the Golden Dialogue of the great master, a majority of sensible men will feel oppressed by the

Phædo

greatness of the subject and the feebleness of man; and it is with these feelings I close this simple objective statement of some of the existing conditions of thought.

NOTES

NOTES

NOTE 1, page 3.

"He gave the little wealth he had
To build a house for fools and mad:
And show'd by one satiric touch
No nation wanted it so much."
Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift.

NOTE 2, page 6.

"I am a true labourer; I earn that I eat, get that I wear, owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness, glad of other men's good, content with my harm, and the greatest of my pride" (to paraphrase Corin's words) is to see my patients get well, and my students work.

NOTE 3, page 10.

A friend (J. S. B.), thoroughly conversant with Eastern life and thought, sends the following criticism of this statement: "Jowett's mistake is not his own. He merely repeats the usual Western error

of thinking — perhaps from the form of the word — that Nirvana means annihilation in the sense of destruction, whereas in the East they understand by it annihilation through growth, in the sense in which the seed is annihilated in the grown plant, the ovum in the animal, or any germ or embryonic form in its complete development. As the possible development of man is infinite, he is in the same way annihilated as man by growing to be coextensive with the universe, which is the natural course of things according to the Eastern view, — the normal process of growth, which may be hastened intentionally if desirable."

NOTE 4, page 10.

Letters of a Chinese Official, 1902.

NOTE 5, page 11.

Nowhere is this philosophy of life so graphically described as in the Wisdom of Solomon, chapter ii.:

"Our life is short and tedious, and in the death of a man there is no remedy: neither was there any man known to have returned from the grave. For we are born at all adventure: and we shall be hereafter as though we had never been: for the breath in our nostrils is as smoke, and a little spark in the moving of our heart: which being extinguished, our body shall be turned into ashes, and our spirit

shall vanish as the soft air. And our name shall be forgotten in time, and no man shall have our works in remembrance, and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist, that is driven away with the beams of the sun, and overcome with the heat thereof. For our time is a very shadow that passeth away; and after our end there is no returning: for it is fast sealed, so that no man cometh again. Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present: and let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments: and let no flower of the spring pass by us: let us crown ourselves with rosebuds, before they be withered: let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness: let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place: for this is our portion, and our lot is this."

NOTE 6, page 13.

"The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new light through chinks that Time hath made:
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become
As they draw near to their eternal home.
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view
That stand upon the threshold of the new."

Old Age, Edmund Waller.

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NOTE 7, page 13.

Literary Friends and Acquaintance, 1902.

NOTE 8, page 13.

Literary Friends and Acquaintance, 1902.

NOTE 9, page 16.

Interstate Commerce Commission, Accident Bulletin, No. 8.

NOTE 10, page 17.

Statistics collected by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, January 30, 1904.

NOTE 11, page 18.

"By brothers' blows, by brothers' blood,
Our souls are gashed and stained.
Alas! What horror have we fled?
What crimes not wrought? What hath the dread
Of heaven our youth restrained?"

(HORACE, *Carmina*, i. 35, Theodore Martin's Translation.)

NOTE 12, page 19.

"Dr. Howe's hand moved slowly back to the big pocket in one of his black coat-tails, and brought out a small, shabby prayer-book.

"'You will let me read the prayers for the sick,'

he continued gently, and without waiting for a reply began to say with more feeling than Dr. Howe often put into the reading of the service, —

"'"Dearly beloved, know this, that Almighty God is the Lord of life and death, and of all things to them pertaining; as"'—

"'Archibald,' said Mr. Denner faintly, 'you will excuse me, but this is not — not necessary, as it were.'

"Dr. Howe looked at him blankly, the prayer-book closing in his hand.

"'I mean,' Mr. Denner added, 'if you will allow me to say so, the time for — for speaking thus has passed. It is now, with me, Archibald.'

"There was a wistful look in his eyes as he spoke.

"'I know,' answered Dr. Howe tenderly, thinking that the Visitation of the Sick must wait, 'but God enters into now; the Eternal is our refuge, a very present help in time of trouble.'

"'Ah — yes,' said the sick man; 'but I should like to approach this from our usual — point of view, if you will be so good. I have every respect for your office, but would it not be easier for us to speak of — of this as we have been in the habit of speaking on all subjects, quite — in our ordinary way, as it were? You will pardon me, Archibald, if I say anything else seems — ah — unreal?'"

NOTE 13, page 26.

This it was which worried Henry More, the Platonist, whose treatise on the "Immortality of the Soul" is full of the wonders of the psychical research of that day. "For if we do but observe the great difference of our intellectual operations in infancy and dotage, from what they are when we are in the prime of our years; and how that our wit grows up by degrees, flourishes for a time, and at last decays, keeping the same pace with the changes that age and years bring into our body, which observes the same laws that flowers and plants do; what can we suspect, but that the soul of man, which is so magnificently spoken of amongst the learned, is nothing else but a temperature of body, and that it grows and spreads with it, both in bigness and virtues, and withers and dies as the body does, or at least that it does wholly depend on the body in its operations, and that therefore there is no sense nor perception of anything after death?" (*Works*, 4th ed., 1713, p. 225.)

NOTE 14, page 30.

Human Personality, London, 1903.

NOTE 15, page 32.

Noll, quoted by Beard, *Review of Neurology and Psychiatry*, January, 1904.

NOTE 16, page 34.

Saint Teresa, 1515–1582. In a paragraph before *A Hymn to the Name and Honour of the Admirable Saint Teresa*, Richard Crashaw thus describes her: "A woman, for angelical height of speculation, for masculine courage of performance, more than a woman, who yet a child outran maturity, and durst plot a martyrdom." In another poem he thus apostrophizes her: —

"O thou undaunted daughter of desires!
By all thy dower of lights and fires;
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove;
By all thy lives and deaths of love;
By thy large draughts of intellectual day;
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they;
By all thy brim-fill'd bowls of fierce desire;
By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire;
By the full kingdom of that final kiss
That seized thy parting soul, and seal'd thee his;
By all the Heavens thou hast in him
(Fair sister of the seraphim);
By all of him we have in thee;
Leave nothing of myself in me.
Let me so read thy life, that I
Unto all life of mine may die."

An excellent paper upon her life and work, by Annie Fields, appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for

March, 1903. In an article, "L'Hystérie de Sainte Thérèse," in the *Archives de Neurologie*, 1902, Dr. Rouby gives an analysis of her life and writings from the standpoint of a modern scientific alienist.

NOTE 17, page 36.

"The men commonly held in popular estimation are greatest at a distance; they become small as they are approached; but the attraction exerted by unconscious holiness is of an urgent and irresistible nature; it persuades the weak, the timid, the wavering, and the inquiring; it draws forth the affection and loyalty of all who are in a measure like-minded; and over the thoughtless or perverse multitude it exercises a sovereign compulsory sway, bidding them fear and keep silence, on the ground of its own right divine to rule them, — its hereditary claim on their obedience, though they understand not the principles or counsels of that spirit, which is born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

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